

U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MEDICAL  
REHABILITATION BUILDING  
(Veterans Administration Facility, Jefferson Barracks, Building No. 65)  
(Veterans Administration Hospital, Jefferson Barracks)  
(Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks  
Division)  
VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division  
1 Jefferson Barracks Drive  
Saint Louis  
Independent City  
Missouri

HABS MO-1943-AD  
*MO-1943-AD*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### U.S. VETERANS HOSPITAL, JEFFERSON BARRACKS, MEDICAL REHABILITATION BUILDING (BUILDING 65)

HABS No. MO-1943-AD

- Location:** Building 65, VA Medical Center, 1 Jefferson Barracks Drive,  
St. Louis, Missouri  
USGS Quadrangle Oakville, Missouri  
UTM Coordinates 16 7258030 E 9965430 N
- Date of Construction:** 1952
- Designer:** Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers, St. Louis, Missouri
- Contractor:** Unknown
- Present Owner:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Present Use:** Medical Rehabilitation
- Significance:** The Medical Rehabilitation Building was constructed as part of an early 1950s expansion of the U.S. Veterans Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, to accommodate veterans of World War II and the Korean War. The building has been the site of medical rehabilitation activities for the hospital since its completion in 1952.
- Project Information:** This project was sponsored and funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as mitigation for the demolition of buildings at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, a property that has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places via consensus determination of eligibility between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources State Historic Preservation Office.

**Description:**

The Medical Rehabilitation Building (Building 65) is a one-story yellow-brick-clad facility with a flat roof. The building is U-shaped with a central block and two wings that extend to the east. The structural frame of the building is of reinforced concrete with concrete posts, beams, and roof slab. The building is located in the northern area of the medical center campus, positioned south of Laundry 3 (Building 88) and east of the Infirm Building (Building 51). The Medical Rehabilitation Building faces large expanses of grass lawn on its south and east sides. The interior of the building interior has corridors that open on each side into small rooms. Some remodeling has been completed on the interior, but several of the rooms and corridor spaces retain the original layout and interior finishes.

The facade of the Medical Rehabilitation Building is on the east side of the building. The building has a center block and two wings that extend east, forming a three-sided courtyard on the east side of the building. The walls of both the center block and the two east wings are composed of yellow brick with a horizontal band of orange brick in the center. Within the orange band of brick are alternating courses of recessed and projecting bricks that create a linear texture. All walls are capped with stone coping.

The center block of the facade has an asymmetrical arrangement of windows and a door, with a rectangular one-over-one metal replacement window and a glass and aluminum replacement double door with aluminum sidelights. To the north of the double doors on the center block is a large opening with triple one-over-one metal replacement windows, then a rectangular one-over-one replacement window, then three small square one-over-one replacement windows, then another larger rectangular one-over-one replacement window.

This center portion of the facade is flanked by the north and south wings. The east wall of each of these wings features yellow and orange striped brickwork and two window openings. Each of the window openings is filled with a triple set of one-over-one metal replacement windows. The outer corner of each of these walls has a small projecting section of brickwork.

The south wall of the north wing, and the north wall of the south wing form the walls of the three-sided courtyard area on the building's east side. The south wall of the north wing has three window openings, two of which have triple one-over-one metal replacement windows, and the third opening has a double one-over-one window. The wall also has one flat metal replacement door. The north wall of the south wing has three window openings. Two of these window openings each have a set of two one-over-one metal replacement windows, and one of the openings has a triple set of these windows. This wall also has two doors: a single flat metal replacement door and a set of flat metal double doors.

The north wall of the north wing and the south wall of the south wing form the north and south walls of this U-shaped building. The north wall has four large openings; each of which has a set of triple one-over-one metal replacement windows. The north wall also features two individual rectangular one-over-one metal replacement windows. The south wall has four large openings, each of which has a set of triple one-over-one metal replacement windows. The south wall also features one individual rectangular one-over-one metal replacement window.

The building's west (rear) wall has a connecting corridor structure that is attached to the center of the wall; this corridor links the Medical Rehabilitation Building to other buildings on the medical center campus. South of the connecting corridor, the west wall features a large opening that has three one-over-one replacement windows, and three smaller window openings, each with a one-over-one metal replacement window. North of the connecting corridor, the west wall has four large window openings, with each of the large openings fitted with three one-over-one metal replacement windows. This part of the wall also has three smaller openings, with each opening filled with a rectangular one-over-one replacement window. Both corners of the west wall also each have a small area of projecting brickwork that extend to the north and south walls. These areas of projecting brick are somewhat like corner pilasters that serve to visually frame the west wall.

The interior of the Medical Rehabilitation Building is composed of an entrance hall that leads into two L-shaped corridors; one corridor leads to the south wing and the other leads to the north wing. The center block of the building also contains several smaller rooms and one large open work area. The center wing has been fairly heavily remodeled within the past fifteen years.

The main corridor of the south wing is double-loaded, opening into a series of rooms. The interior of the building's south wing contains many original finishes and retains a fairly intact floor plan that has not been changed much from the building's original condition. The south wing's main corridor retains original painted plaster and dull green-colored glazed terra-cotta-block walls. Many original paneled wood doors remain, including one-panel wood doors for fire extinguisher closets, and flat wood doors for rooms and closets. Several rooms in the south wing feature exposed concrete posts and beams, exposed concrete-slab ceilings, and painted walls composed of large terra-cotta or concrete blocks. These rooms appear to have changed little from their original condition, and many rooms in the south wing are still used for medical rehabilitation.

The interior of the north wing has a lower level of integrity. This area has been remodeled within the last twenty years; original paneled wood interior doors have been replaced with newer flat double and single steel doors. Also, the larger medical rehabilitation rooms have been divided up into smaller offices and work spaces to support the north wing's current

administrative function. Rooms in the north wing have, for the most part, been completely remodeled with acoustical drop ceilings and gypsum-board walls.

### **History:**

The construction of the Medical Rehabilitation Building is related to a post-World War II conversion of the VA Hospital at Jefferson Barracks from a general medicine facility to a neuropsychiatric hospital. With the end of the war, a large number of veterans required medical and psychiatric treatment, and to address this situation in St. Louis, the VA constructed the John Cochran Hospital downtown for general medicine, and converted the existing Jefferson Barracks facility (south of the city) to a neuropsychiatric hospital. The John Cochran Hospital was built in the late 1940s and early 1950s, while initial new construction and remodeling for the neuropsychiatric facility was carried out at Jefferson Barracks from 1950 to 1952.

### **1940s Mental Health Reform and Post-World War II VA Neuropsychiatric Hospital Design**

The conversion of the Jefferson Barracks facility to a modern neuropsychiatric hospital was related to a wave mental health reform at the end of World War II. Public demands for improved conditions were stoked by a 1946 article in *Life* magazine, written by medical writer Albert Q. Maisel. Entitled "Bedlam 1946: Most of U.S. Mental Hospitals Are a Shame and a Disgrace," the article exposed shocking abuses in mental hospitals.<sup>1</sup> By 1947, as part of an effort to build new VA hospitals, Dr. Paul Haun, a psychiatrist with the VA's Washington D.C. office, developed the "Schematic Plan for a 1,000-Bed VA Hospital," a general plan for psychiatric hospital facilities that recommended the types of buildings to be provided, as well as the number of floors and other details. This plan was publicized in the article "New Trends in Hospital Design," by Haun and Dr. Z. M. Lebensohn, in the February 1948 edition of *The American Journal of Psychiatry*.<sup>2</sup>

A separate, free-standing medical rehabilitation building was not included in Haun's 1947 schematic plan; Haun thought medical rehabilitation should take place in a hospital's admissions and continued treatment buildings. It is not clear why the VA included a separate medical rehabilitation building at Jefferson Barracks. However, Haun did strongly emphasize recreational and occupational activities as a form of therapy, so a specialized medical rehabilitation building would not be out of line with Haun's overall treatment philosophy.

---

<sup>1</sup> Albert Q. Maisel, "Bedlam 1946: Most of U.S. Mental Hospitals Are a Shame and a Disgrace," *Life*, May 6, 1946, 102-118.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Haun and Z. M. Lebensohn, "New Trends in Hospital Design," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 104, no. 8 (February 1948): 555-564.

### **The Function of the Medical Rehabilitation Building at Jefferson Barracks**

Although a separate building for medical rehabilitation was not a major part of the schematic plan for VA hospitals that had been published by Haun and Lebensohn in 1948, one was included at Jefferson Barracks as part of the facility's 1950-1952 conversion to a neuropsychiatric hospital. The idea of medical rehabilitation is very much in line with Haun's philosophy, which strongly emphasized preparing the patient to return to the world outside of the hospital through therapy, recreational activities, and work activities that taught a job skill or that improved an aspect of the patient's personality.<sup>3</sup>

The floor plan of the Medical Rehabilitation Building at Jefferson Barracks was drawn up in 1950 by Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers. Jamieson and Spearl was founded in St. Louis in 1918 when James Jamieson partnered with George Spearl. The firm was notable for designing major buildings at several colleges and universities across the Midwest, including ones at Washington University in St. Louis. Jamieson died in 1941, before the firm did work at the VA Hospital, Jefferson Barracks, but the firm continued to use the name Jamieson and Spearl into the 1950s.<sup>4</sup>

The Medical Rehabilitation Building originally housed therapy activities that involved learning crafts or some type of useful trade or skill. The largest spaces in the building were devoted to shop spaces for woodworking, silk screening, graphic arts and quilting, and sewing and textiles. One large room was divided into areas for three trades: metal shop, jewelry making, and leather. The printing shop had a fairly sizable room as well. Smaller spaces in the building were devoted to an electrical shop, shoe-repair shop, photography darkroom, plastics shop, and typing room. The building also contained offices and spaces for utility equipment such as pumps and transformers.<sup>5</sup>

In a 1958 article on the Jefferson Barracks VA Hospital, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reporter Mary Kimbrough characterized the campus as a 185-bed facility with a pleasant tree-lined campus and emphasized that it was a place where patients were involved with therapeutic activities to help them recover from their conditions and eventually return to normal life. An important part of this program was the craft and trade activities that went on in the Medical Rehabilitation Building. For example, the article stated that "one [patient] might need the calming rehabilitative therapy of crafts; he is taught woodworking or

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Esley Hamilton, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form for the Washington University Hilltop Campus Historic District*, 1978, on file at the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office.

<sup>5</sup> Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers, *Construction Drawings for 544-Bed Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Medical Rehabilitation Building*, 1950, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

metalworking.”<sup>6</sup> As an illustration of the benefits of this type of therapy, the article stated: “One patient who at first was wildly destructive in the craft room, smashing articles in angry rebellion, today has developed into a poised and quiet artisan, turning out exquisitely delicate figurines.”<sup>7</sup> The classes involved both art and craft activities that relaxed the patients and gave them a sense of accomplishment, and activities such as typing and electrical shop, which were less artistic but gave the patients useful skills they might use to help make a living once they left the hospital.<sup>8</sup>

The 1958 Kimbrough article also emphasized other positive aspects of hospital life, including the policy that patients wear their own clothing instead of hospital uniforms, and the arrangement of having patients live in small wards instead of large dormitories. The influence of Dr. Paul Haun was showcased in the article, and the text repeated verbatim many of the statements about mental-health treatment that were included in Haun and Lebensohn’s 1948 article. The Kimbrough article also mentioned how the one-story design of buildings like the Medical Rehabilitation Building allowed patients easier access to the outdoors and made them feel less confined, giving them more of a feeling of a normal daily life.<sup>9</sup>

The entire space of the Medical Rehabilitation Building was used for medical rehabilitation from the 1950s through the 1970s. All windows were replaced in 1982 as part of a multi-building window replacement project.<sup>10</sup> Today, portions of the building, especially the center and north wings, have been remodeled and are used as administrative space, but a significant amount of space, especially in the south wing, is still used for rehabilitation activities. The building’s south wing still retains the original room layout and original finishes such as wood doors and green terra-cotta-tile walls. Plans for the imminent redevelopment of the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, call for the demolition of the Medical Rehabilitation Building in the next few years. Once the Medical Rehabilitation Building is demolished, the land will be re-used as a site for new medical center facilities.

### **Sources:**

Hamilton, Esley. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form for the Washington University Hilltop Campus Historic District*. 1978. On file at the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office, Jefferson City.

---

<sup>6</sup> Mary Kimbrough, “Rehabilitation Is Goal at Barracks Hospital,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 6, 1958.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Veterans Administration, Construction drawing files for Building 65, 1950-2010, on file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Haun, Paul, and Z. M. Lebensohn, "New Trends in Hospital Design," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 104, no. 8 (February 1948): 555-564.

Jamieson and Spearl, Architects and Engineers. *Construction Drawings for 544-Bed Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Medical Rehabilitation Building*. 1950. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

Kimbrough, Mary. "Rehabilitation Is Goal at Barracks Hospital." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 6, 1958.

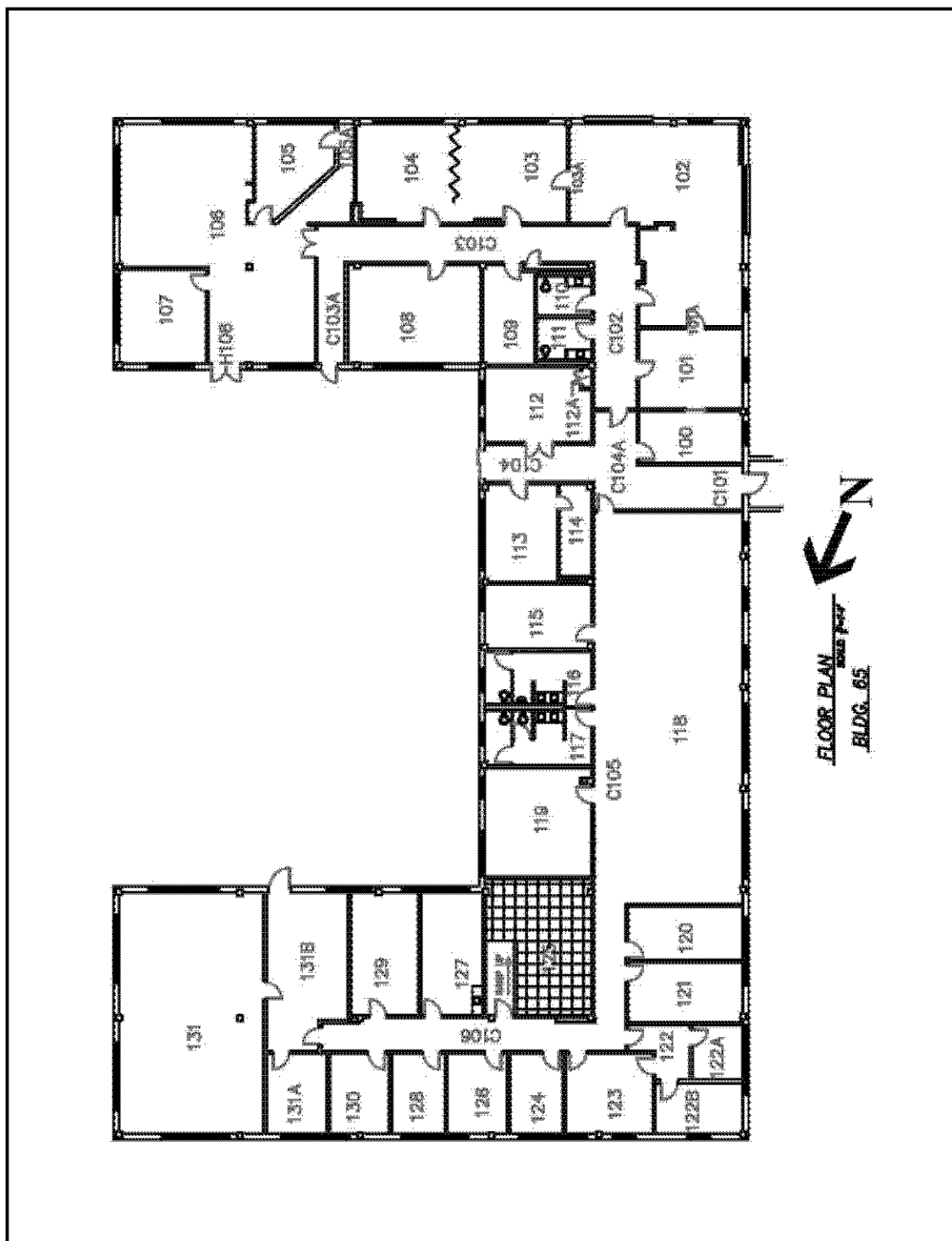
Maisel, Albert Q. "Bedlam 1946: Most of U.S. Mental Hospitals Are a Shame and a Disgrace." *Life*, May 6, 1946, 102-118.

U.S. Veterans Administration. Construction drawing files for Building 65, 1950-2010. On file at St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division, Building 3T.

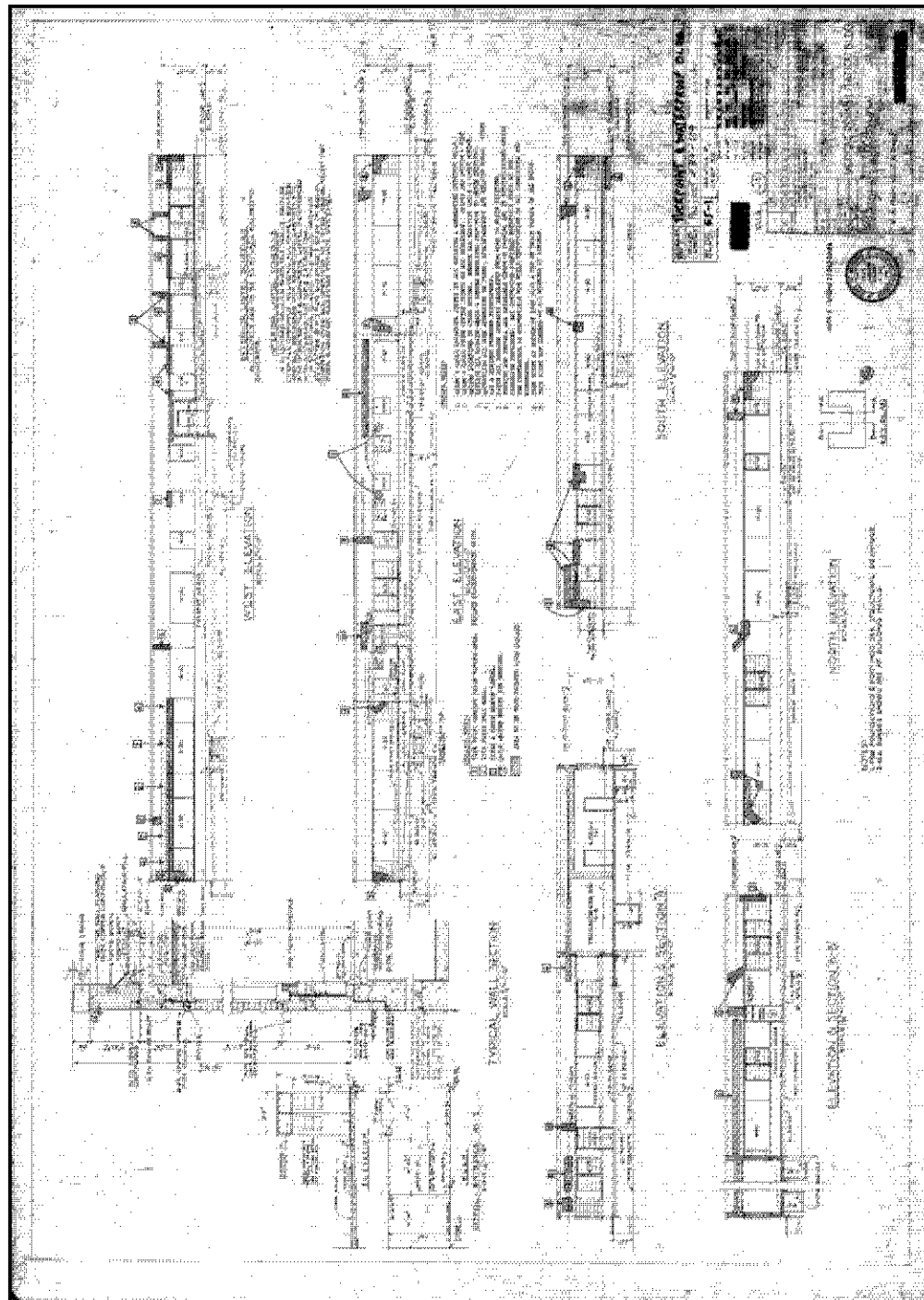
**Historians:**

Maria Burkett, Roy Hampton  
Hardlines Design Company  
4608 Indianola Avenue  
Columbus, Ohio 43214  
Tel: 614-784-8733  
Fax: 614-786-9336

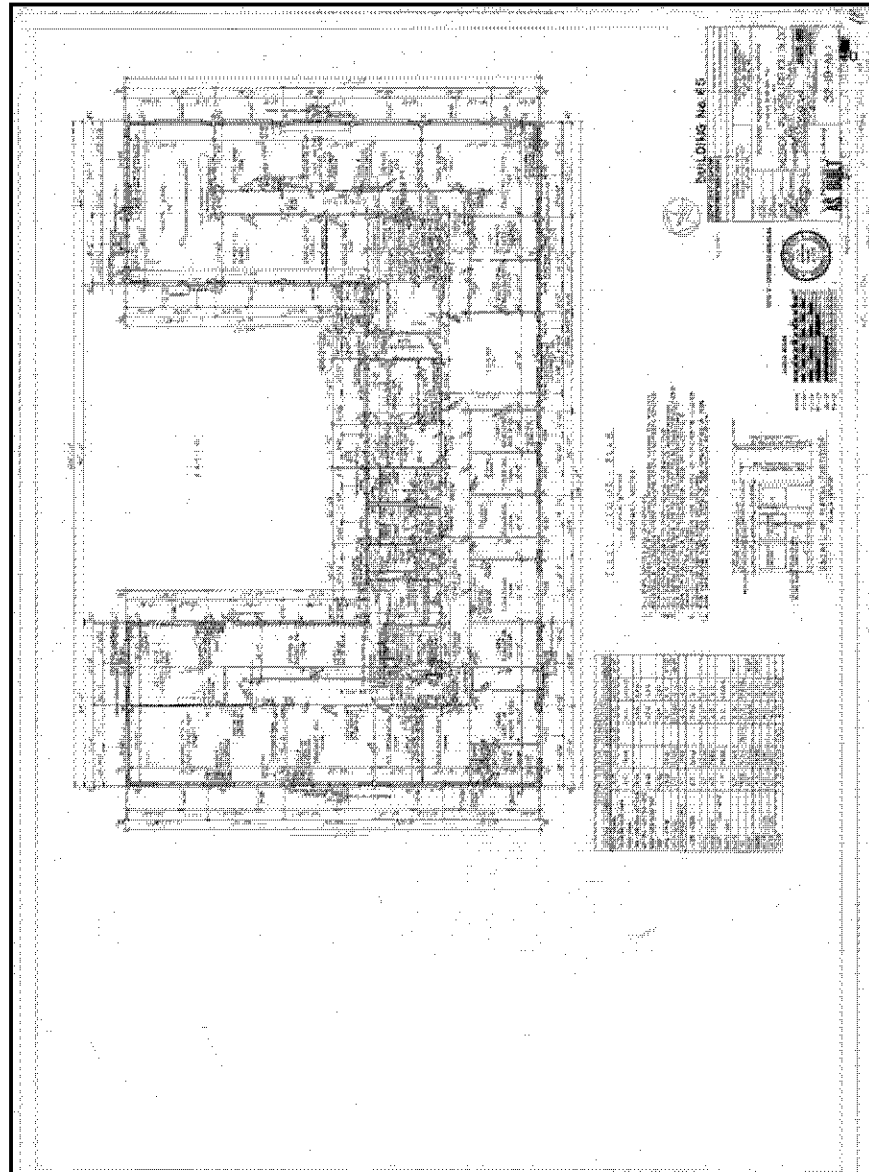




Medical Rehabilitation Building (Building 65), current floor plan



Original elevations for the Medical Rehabilitation Building (Building 65), 1950



Original plans for the Medical Rehabilitation Building (Building 65), 1950